

CODA: A Customizable Database Application for Managing Open Access Publication Costs

As open access (OA) publishing becomes increasingly prevalent, research institutions face growing demands for funding and financing transparency and sustainable organization and documentation in publication funding. Traditional approaches often rely on manually maintained spreadsheets, prone to human error, difficult to scale, and lack a standardized structure, making accurate evaluation and reporting of publication costs a major challenge.

To address these issues, we developed CODA (Customizable Open Access Database Application) as part of the BMFTR-funded project ADoRe-OA. Unlike excel spreadsheets, often used for publication documentation cases, CODA is a web application that offers features modelling key entities such as publications, funding requests, contracts, and invoices as well as their relationships. Therefore, CODA enables various user groups within the same institution to collaboratively manage the entire OA funding lifecycle —from request evaluation and invoice processing to comprehensive cost monitoring and reporting within one unified platform.

To ensure that CODA allows seamless interaction with other tools and data integration in the OA space, it was built to rely on established standards like the COAR Resource Types for publication types and the openCost schema for reporting.

Furthermore, CODA is largely customizable to institutional needs: journal or publisher blocklists and automatic eligibility checks (e.g., Directory of Open Access Journals [DOAJ] inclusion) support the funding decision process; subject areas and publication types can be flexibly included or excluded; local currencies are supported by automatic conversion; and freely definable labels can be used to reflect institutional workflows. Already existing data (e.g., past funding requests or invoices) can easily be imported to create a consolidated and sustainable OA data environment.

Although currently still under active development, CODA aims to offer a low-threshold, open-source solution for institutions seeking to optimize OA cost management while aligning with emerging transparency standards.

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